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ABSTRACT

The Model communication skills lexicon, developed by the Southwest Regional Laboratory (SWRL) for use in communication skills instruction in kindergarten through sixth grade, consists of three word lists--an entry list, a general list, and a technical list. The Model 3 entry lexicon (Rhode, 1972)--based on a predominately white sample--was compared with the Thomas (1962) and Legum, Pfaff, Tinnie, and Nicholas (1971) lexicons--both based on black samples. Words unique to any lexicon were categorized and checked to see if any of them were important enough to require supplemental teaching. Most words present in one lexicon but lacking in the others could be easily accounted for by sampling error. Thus, it was concluded that the entry lexicon is probably adequate for use with black kindergarten children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. (Author/RB)

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A COMPARISON OF THE MOD 3 ENTRY LEXICON WITH TWO LEXICONS OF BLACK KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

Pamela Terry

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The entry lexicon (Rhode, 1972)--based on a predominately White sample--was compared with the Thomas (1962) and Legum, Pfaff, Tinnie, and Nicholas (1971) lexicons--both based upon Black samples. Words unique to any lexicon were categorized and checked to see if any of them were important enough to require supplemental teaching. Most words present in one lexicon but lacking from the others could be easily accounted for by sampling error. Thus, it was concluded that the entry lexicon is probably adequate for use with Black kindergarten children from low socio-economic backgrounds.

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A COMPARISON OF THE MOD 3 ENTRY LEXICON WITH TWO LEXICONS OF BLACK KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

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PROBLEM

A mismatch between a child's spoken vocabulary and the written vocabulary he is expected to read in beginning reading material may add to the difficulty of learning to read. Rhode (1972) has compiled an entry lexicon of words representative of the words known by all children entering kindergarten. This entry lexicon will form the word base for all of SWRL's Mod 3 communication skills instruction. The purpose of the present comparative study was to obtain an overview of the adequacy of the entry lexicon (Rhode, 1972) for use with Black kindergarten children from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Since the entry lexicon is presumed to be representative of the vocabularies of all kindergarten children, it would be important to discover any possible inadequacies for certain sub-groups of children as early as possible in order to allow for alternative or supplemental instructional routines or adaptations. Naturally, it would also be valuable to have corroboration of the entry lexicon's adequacy for disparate segments of the kindergarten population.

The approach used to obtain this information was a comparison of the entry lexicon with the only two lexicons known to be based upon the speech of Black kindergarten children--Thomas (1962) and Legum, Pfaff, Tinnie, and Nicholas (1971).

The following questions were of interest:

1) Do most of the words in the entry lexicon occur in the spoken vocabularies of Black kindergarten children? If not, are they

most likely missing due to sampling error or is there some more specific reason why they do not occur?

2) Do most of the words in the speaking vocabularies of Black kindergarten children occur in the entry lexicon? If not, are they most likely missing due to sampling error, or is there some more specific reason why they are not included in the entry lexicon?

3) Are the words that are unique to any lexicon important enough that they should be taught supplementally?

The purpose of this study, in other words, was to discover to what extent the entry lexicon intersects with the lexicons from two studies of Black kindergarten children's vocabulary. Interest centered on discrepancies among the lexicons and possible explanations for them.

LIMITATIONS

It was realized at the outset that three independent lexicons would contain important methodological differences affecting their comparability. Limiting factors included variation in:

a) Sample size and characteristics

The entry lexicon (Rhode, 1972) was based upon four sources: Kolson (1960)--primary source--, Murphy (1957), Weaver (1955), and Entwistle (1966).[1] All these sources were predominantly based on White youngsters from middle socio-economic backgrounds. The Legum et al. study, on the other hand, was all derived from Black children from low socio-economic backgrounds. The Thomas study gathered information on both Black and White children from low

[1]For additional information on the entry lexicon and its sources, refer to Cronnell (1969, 1971a, and 1971b).

socio-economic backgrounds, but only data from Black children were used for the present comparison.

Whereas the entry lexicon was based on four sources using a total of approximately 1,250 children, the Thomas lexicon was based on 50 children and the Legum et al. lexicon sampled 5 kindergarten children.

b) Number of total running words collected

There were extreme differences in the number of running words collected. The entry lexicon was based on nearly 1,500,000 running words compared to around 25,000 running words in the Thomas study and around 10,000 running words in the Legum et al. study.

c) Number of different words collected

The Thomas lexicon contained about twice as many different words as the Legum et al. lexicon, while the entry lexicon had seven times as many distinct words as the Legum et al. study. The separate lexicons also used different cut-off points for low frequency words.

d) Time spent gathering the speech samples

The Thomas study relied on data gathered in one 15 minute interview with each child. Three group interviews of 30-45 minutes each were recorded on consecutive days in the Legum et al. study. In addition, speech samples were collected in individual interviews with three children. The other two children in the Legum et al. study were interviewed as a pair. All of the data, thus, was gathered within one week's time. Sources for the entry

lexicon, however, collected speech samples over much longer time periods. Kolson gathered data under various home and classroom settings throughout the year. Both Murphy and Weaver collected words during regular class activities at several times during the school year.

e) Times of year the speech samples were collected

Holidays and seasonal events are more likely to be topics of conversation at certain times of the year than at others. Both the Thomas and Legum et al. studies were limited to one particular time of the year whereas the entry lexicon sources covered several different seasons.

f) Recency of collection of the speech samples

A ten to fifteen year gap exists between the most recent data gathered (Legum et al., 1971) and some of the other sources, such as the oldest used in the entry lexicon (e.g., Weaver, 1955).

g) Geographic locations used

The Legum et al. study was limited to one classroom in the urban Los Angeles area. Thomas's data was collected in one school in Detroit and included several children born in the South. Data used in the entry lexicon, though, were collected in New England, rural Los Angeles County, Pittsburgh, Washington D.C., and Portland, Oregon.

Because of these limiting factors, the lexicons were so disparate as to preclude any formal definitive statements concerning the previously stated questions. It was hoped, however, that in spite of these limitations, the information gathered would be useful in showing trends and in giving a

rough estimate of the adequacy of the entry lexicon, or, at the very least in providing enough information to decide whether there would be justification for an in-depth comparative study possibly involving the gathering of new and more comparable data on Black kindergarten children from low socio-economic backgrounds.

METHOD

For the present study, the three lexicons--Thomas, Legum et al., and the entry lexicon--were checked against each other for common words. Lists were then compiled of all the words occurring in each Black lexicon (taken separately) that were not in the entry lexicon and vice versa. The size discrepancy between the entry lexicon and the other lexicons resulted in too many words to handle easily. Therefore, in order to make more meaningful comparisons, the words were categorized under such topics as food, animals, clothing, etc. Within each category, the lists were compared to see which words were:

1) common to all three lexicons,

2) common to any two lexicons,

3) only in one of the lexicons.

Possible explanations for a word's occurrence in either one, two, or all three of the lexicons were sought.

It was assumed that those words common to all three lexicons could quite safely be assumed to be well known by even very heterogeneous groups of kindergarten children. Such words could probably be used in books and other media and be understood with little difficulty. Words occurring in both the entry lexicon and either one of the Black lexicons would also seem to pose no differential problems for either Black or White

kindergarten children from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. The most interesting words would be those that appeared either exclusively in the entry lexicon or exclusively in the Black lexicons. It would be among these words that any dialect words or words possibly unfamiliar to a large group of the kindergartners would appear.

RESULTS

Because of the previously mentioned inequalities in the lexicons, it was difficult to make any emphatic statements of the results. For example, it was impossible to state that a word present in the entry lexicon but not occurring in a Black lexicon was truly not in the Black children's vocabularies. It could easily have been in their vocabularies, but not elicited from the particular group of students engaged in particular topics of conversation at that particular time. However, such words were scrutinized for possible hypotheses about why or why not the word might be common to one group but not another.

Because words in songs, poems, titles, rhymes, and common sayings (e.g., Pledge of Allegiance) are not necessarily in a child's normal speaking vocabulary, such words, if identified, were regarded with less significance.

Children's use of possibly racially meaningful terms was interpreted cautiously, and no immediate significance was attributed to such words. Since all of the Legum et al. data were available, including the transcript of the children's discussions, terms found in Legum et al. but not in the entry lexicon were carefully checked against their original

usage in the conversational context. Explanations for some of the more questionable terms turned out to be as follows:

watt - typographical error for "wait"

whitey - found in "Mary had a little lamb,...fleece was whitey snow..."

eenie, meenie, minee, moe - used in counting rhyme: eenie, meenie, minee, moe, catch a tiger by the toe...

fasto - child's mispronunciation of fatso

mes - child wanted his turn saying "let mes finish mine."

hopple - sung in Jingle Bells: "...in a hopple, slopple sleigh."

jockle - pronunciation of a word misheard. Child 1 said, "a doctor." Child 2 asked, "A jockle?" Word was clarified, "No, a doctor...

tapers - a word made up to refer to the tape recording equipment

twinkle -in song "twinkle, twinkle, little star"

holy, calm - in song "Silent night, holy night, all is calm..."

hoe - in a poem, "I traded for a hoe, the hoe wouldn't chop..."

letters O, J - appeared in the name of O.J. Simpson

Jungleland - local amusement area in Los Angeles

tippy toeing - "I'm tippy-toeing."

The words seen above are not dialect words nor important words to the Black children themselves. The only word that might perhaps be considered a dialect usage is the use of fitting to mean "starting to." The word in context was "I was fitting to say something." There is little or no need for supplemental teaching of these words to other students in the classroom.

In comparing the Black and White lexicons within categories, some interesting trends may be seen even though there do not appear to be any major gaps of knowledge between the lexicons. For example, in order to

better see trends, the food category was further subdivided into starches, fruits, sweets, meats, and vegetables.

It was interesting that the entry lexicon included many fruits not found in the Black lexicons. The Thomas lexicon (Black) had only one fruit--a raisin--that was not also in the entry lexicon. On the other hand, the Thomas lexicon had several references to starches not in the other lexicons, including such things as grits and corn bread, while the larger entry lexicon contained only four references to starches not found in the other lexicons (although they were quite fancy starches such as pretzels and waffles). In the category of sweets, the entry lexicon listed almost fifteen references to dessert-like words whereas the Thomas only listed one not in the other lexicons--gingerbread. In the vegetable category, the only word unique to the Thomas lexicon was spinach. The entry lexicon alone listed such relishes as olive, pickle, radish, and celery, hardly staples. This may say something about differences in the diets of the Black children from low-income backgrounds vs. White children from middle-income backgrounds. A major factor affecting the diet would seem to be the economic difference which was confounded with the Black-White variable. However, rather than just economic differences, there also seem to be geographical distinctions showing up here. Many of the foods unique to the Black lexicons are "Southern cooking." Grits, for example, are common among both Blacks and Whites in the South, but rarely heard of in other regions of the country. The entry lexicon is known to be underrepresentative of the South and would therefore not be likely to include typical Southern foods.

The clothing category hints at a tendency for the entry lexicon to contain more specific words than the other lexicons. The more common words seem to be included in both a White and a Black lexicon or all three of the

lexicons. This greater specificity of the entry lexicon is, no doubt, due to its larger sample size. It is logical that the more words included, the greater the possibility of including some low frequency (more specific) words as well as high frequency ones. Whereas coat is common to both Thomas and the entry lexicon, the more specific word raincoat (with a lower frequency) is only in the entry lexicon. Also unique to the entry lexicon are specific names of materials, i.e., wool, leather, silk, nylon, etc. These also happen to be quite low frequency words.

In the category Parts of the Body there were more words unique to the entry lexicon than unique to the Black lexicons. The words, however, did not seem qualitatively different and there is no clear reason why most of the children wouldn't know words such as knee, thumb, and tongue. Sampling errors seem to account for a large proportion of the words missing from the Black lexicons. For example, tooth was in the entry lexicon, but not in Thomas or Legum et al. Teeth, though, was in all three of the lexicons, making it highly probable that all of the children knew both words. Also, there were many more words common to both the entry lexicon and the Black lexicons than occurred in the entry lexicon alone.

The animal category showed the highest frequency words (e.g., cat, dog) as being common to all three lexicons. There were many animals missing from the Black lexicons that were in the entry lexicon. Several are specific types within a category (e.g., owl, eagle, parrot, and pigeon in the bird category). However, the words unique to the Black lexicons are specific, too, e.g., colt, salmon, hound, shark, and weasel (although weasel may be from the song "Pop goes the weasel"). There exists the possibility that Black kindergarten children may not know some of the animals found only in the entry lexicon, but this cannot be clearly

Color words mentioned only in the entry lexicon tend to be lower frequency words (with the exception of yellow). Purple, tan, and violet are certainly less frequently used colors than white, black, green, or red, which are common to both Black and White lexicons. There do not appear to be any meaningful differences between the three lexicons for this category.

Other categories looked at included: sicknesses and diseases; emotions and feelings; money; tools and small appliances; and musical terms. These categories showed the same patterns of words being present or lacking from specific lexicons due to sampling errors or sample size discrepancies and added no new information.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the entry lexicon contains many more words than either the Thomas or Legum et al. lexicon. Since most of the words in the Legum et al. and Thomas lexicons are included in the entry lexicon, it seems to rather adequately cover those terms most often used by Black children from low socio-economic backgrounds. Those words unique to the Black lexicons do not seem to be dialect words, but rather are words that can be explained as:

1) localisms - terms common in a particular geographic location e.g., Jungleland (Los Angeles area).
2) words in songs, stories, rhymes, etc.--allegiance from "Pledge of Allegiance."
3) nonsense words made up by the children to substitute for unknown words, e.g., "hopple, slopple sleigh" in "Jingle Bells."
4) informal slang terms that did not occur in more formal interview situations. For example, expressions such as snotty, fatty, fatso, etc. occurred in the casual group discussions in the Legum et al. study.

The question of whether Black kindergarten children from low socio-economic backgrounds lack some of the words in the entry lexicon cannot be answered definitely. There was a large enough size differential between the samples to account for the fairly large numbers of entry lexicon words that failed to appear in the Black lexicons. Also, the tendency for those words unique to the entry lexicon to be lower frequency words than those common to the different lexicons also implicates sample size as a major determinant of whether words are included in a lexicon. The likelihood of lower frequency words occurring spontaneously in conversation certainly increases as the sample size increases. Larger, more comparable samples of Black kindergarten children's speech would probably have included many of the words found only in the entry lexicon.

Although there still exists the possibility that not all Black kindergarten children know all the words in the entry lexicon, the magnitude of the problem does not seem to justify a full-scale investigation requiring the gathering of a new, enlarged Black lexicon. To determine which words, if any, are truly unknown by many Black kindergarten children, a follow-up study could easily be done. One could present some of the more important words found only in the entry lexicon to a sample of Black kindergarten children--perhaps via a picture identification task--and thereby pinpoint particularly difficult words that might require supplemental teaching.

The evidence presently available, however, does not seem strong enough to suggest that there are significant differences between the lexicons. Those differences noticed seem adequately explainable by the variation in the samples. Therefore, in spite of the possibility that some of the words may be new to Black kindergarten children, the entry lexicon, based on a predominantly White sample, does seem adequate for use with Black kindergarten children from low socio-economic backgrounds.

APPENDIX A: WORDS LISTED BY CATEGORY

ANIMALS

I. Words Common to All Three Lexicons

cat
dog
horse
lamb
puppy
snake
turkey

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons

Entry & Thomas	Entry & Legum	Thomas & Legum
bear	elephant	none
bunny	frog	
chicken	hen	
cow	sheep	
donkey	tiger	
duck		
fox		
monkey		
mouse		
pig		
rabbit		
turtle		
wolf		

III. Words in Only One Lexicon

Entry	Thomas	Legum
alligator	colt	shark
ant	goose	
bee	hound	
billy goat	salmon	
bird	weasel	
birdie		
butterfly		
camel		
caterpillar		
chick		
collie		
crab		
crocodile		

III. Words in Only One Lexicon (continued)

Entry

deer
eagle
Easter bunny
giraffe
goat
goldfish
gorilla
grasshopper
kangaroo
kitten
kitty
kitty cat
lion
mice
owl
parrot
pigeon
pony
pussy
rat
reindeer
rooster
seal
shrimp
skunk
spider
squirrel
steer
tadpole
trout
whale

ARTICLES OF CLOTHING

I. Words Common to All Three Lexicons

clothes
dress
shoe
sock

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons

Entry & Thomas	Entry & Legum	Thomas & Legum
apron	belt	none
blouse	pajamas	
cap	purse	
coat	ribbon	
glove	tie	
hat		
holster		
hose		
pants		
skirt		
suit		
sweater		

III. Words in Only One Lexicon

Entry	Thomas	Legum
cloth	panties	none
collar	undershirt	
dungarees		
gown		
helmet		
hood		
jacket		
jeans		
mask		
mitten		
outfit		
petticoat		
raincoat		
rubbers		
sandal		
scarf		
skirt		
slip		
slipper		

III. Words in Only One Lexicon (continued)

Entry

smock
stocking
veil
wrap
zipper

material

cotton
fur
knit
lace
leather
nylon
silk
wool

COLORS

I. Words Common to All Three Lexicons

black
brown
green
white

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons

Entry & Thomas	Entry & Legum	Thomas & Legum
blue	orange	none
gold	red	
gray		

III. Words in Only One Lexicon

Entry	Thomas	Legum
pink	none	none
purple		
silver		
tan		
violet		
yellow		

FOOD

I. Words Common to All Three Lexicons

cake
candy
fish
lamb
orange
pancake
potato
turkey
water

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons

Entry & Thomas	Entry & Legum	Thomas & Legum
apple	bean	none
bacon	beer	
banana	honey	
bread	pumpkin	
bubble gum		
bun		
cabbage		
carrot		
cereal		
chicken		
chip		
cigarette		
coffee		
cookie		
corn		
cornflake		
cream		
cupcake		
donut (doughnut)		
duck		
egg		
fruit		
grape		
gravy		
ham		
hamburger		
ice cream		
jello		
milk		
meat		
oatmeal		
pea		
peach		
peanut		

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons (continued)

Entry & Thomas

pepper
pie
pineapple
popcorn
popsicle
potato chips
roast
salad
salt
sandwich
soup
sucker
sugar
spaghetti
tea
toast
vegetable

III. Words in Only One Lexicon

Entry	Thomas	Legum
applesauce	biscuit	pizza
brownie	bologna	
celery	bread stick	
cherry	catsup	
cocoa	corn bread	
coconut	gingerbread	
cone	goose	
crab	grits	
cracker	lard	
cranberry	liver	
date	muffin	
frosting	pork	
jam	porridge	
juice	rice	
lemonade	raisin	
lifesaver	salmon	
lollipop	sausage	
marshmallow	spice	
nut	spinach	
oat	whiskey	
olive		
pear		
pickle		
pretzel		
pudding		
punch		

III. Words in Only One Lexicon (continued)

Entry

radish
sauce
shrimp
soda
strawberry
vanilla
waffle
walnut

Subdivisions of the Food Category

Starches

Entry only	Thomas only	Legum only	Common to all three
cracker	biscuit	pizza	cake
oat	bread stick		pancake
pretzel	corn bread		
waffle	grits		
	muffin		
	porridge		
	rice		

Fruits

Entry only	Thomas only	Legum only	Common to all three
applesauce	raisin	none	orange
cherry			watermelon
cranberry			
date			
pear			
strawberry			
lemonade			
juice			

Sweets

Entry only	Thomas only	Legum only	Common to all three
brownie	gingerbread	none	cake
coconut			candy
cone			
frosting			
jam			
marshmallow			
nuts			
pudding			

Sweets (continued)

Entry only

punch
sauce
soda
strawberry
vanilla
walnut

Meats

Entry only	Thomas only	Legum only	Common to all three
crab	bologna	none	fish
shrimp	goose		lamb
	liver		turkey
	pork		
	salmon		

Vegetables

Entry only	Thomas only	Legum only	Common to all three
celery	spinach	none	potato
olive			
pickle			
radish			

HOUSEHOLD FURNISHINGS

I. Words Common to All Three Lexicons

bed
chair
stove
table

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons

Entry & Thomas	Entry & Legum	Thomas & Legum
closet	drawer	none
couch	oven	
curtain		
dish		
furniture		
iron		
lamp		
light		
lock		
mop		
pillow		
radio		
rug		
pot		
toilet		

III. Words in Only One Lexicon

Entry	Thomas	Legum
cot	barbeque	none
crib	figerator [sic]	
desk		
dresser		
elevator		
furnace		
lantern		
mattress		
mirror		
pan		
pitcher		
phone		
phonograph		
tablecloth		
toaster		
vacuum		

PARTS OF THE BODY

I. Words Common to All Three Lexicons

back
eye
face
feet
hair
hand
head
leg
nose
side
teeth

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons

Entry & Thomas	Entry & Legum	Thomas & Legum
bottom	finger	none
chin	foot	
ear	mouth	
fist	toe	
heel	(voice)	
neck		
stomach		

III. Words in Only One Lexicon

Entry	Thomas	Legum
beard	liver	none
chest	muscle	
heart		
knee		
skeleton		
skin		
shoulder		
throat		
thumb		
tongue		
tooth		
whisker		

PROFESSIONS

I. Words Common to All Three Lexicons

doctor
policeman
teacher

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons

Entry & Thomas	Entry & Legum	Thomas & Legum
cowboy	leader	none
fireman		
nurse		
police		
sailor		

III. Words in Only One Lexicon

Entry	Thomas	Legum
bomber	baker	none
carpenter	busman	
conductor	iceman	
dancer	sailor man	
dentist	woodcutter	
driver	wrestler	
engineer		
farmer		
guard		
janitor		
mailman		
milkman		
outlaw		
president		
sheriff		
shepherd		
soldier		

MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

I. Words Common to All Three Lexicons

bicycle
bike
car

II. Words Common to Two Lexicons

Entry & Thomas	Entry & Legum	Thomas & Legum
airplane	sleigh	none
machine		
train		
truck		
wagon		

III. Words in Only One Lexicon

Entry	Thomas	Legum
ambulance	express	none
auto	fire truck	
automobile	racer	
caboose		
cruiser		
elevator		
helicopter		
motor		
motorboat		
plane		
rocket		
sailboat		
ship		
sled		
snowplow		
spaceship		
stagecoach		
station wagon		
streetcar		
tractor		
trailer		
tricycle		
tug		

APPENDIX B

WORDS USED BY BLACK KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN IN THE LEGUM ET AL. STUDY (1971), BUT NOT FOUND IN THE ENTRY LEXICON (RHODE, 1972).

blame
bo
boo
boss
breath
calm
classroom
daddy'o
dumb
eenie
everytime (2 words in
fasto Entry Lexicon)
fatso
fatty
fitting
flu
grease
hassle
hoe
holy
hopple
hush
jockle
jungleland
married
marry
mash
meenie
mes
minee
moe
nasty
nope
ought
pizza
raggedy
riddle
shark
silent
sneak
snotty
spit
stomp
stoop
stuffy
tapers
that's
tickle
tippy
toeing
trade
trash
twinkle
wag
wham
whip
whitey

APPENDIX C

WORDS IN THE THOMAS LEXICON BUT NOT FOUND IN THE ENTRY LEXICON (RHODE, 1972)

abc's
age
airport
alley
any time
argue
auntie
baker
bald
barbeque
base
battle
beaten
biscuits
bob
bologna
boo
boss
boyfriend
bread stick
bury
busman
catsup
'cause
citizen
clasp
colt
comic
corn bread
crystal
den
department
detention
devil
dodge
donut
doze
drunk
'em
express
felt
fetch
fiddle
figerator [sic]
fire truck
flake
folk(s)
forty
funnel
gamble
generator
giddy
gingerbread
goose
granddaddy
grease
grits
guitar
hmm
hound
hymn
iceman
jaywalk
kick ball
lard
liver
load
loaf
lone
ma'am
map
marry
mash
mass
midnight
muscle
nigh
nor
nowhere
ought
paddle
pale
panties
pitch
pork
porridge
preach
price
princess
project
puff
racer
raisin
range
refrigerator
rice
robber
rock-a-bye-baby
rocking chair
sailor man
salmon
sausage
scald
score
scotch
scrape
seek
shooter
sickle
smother
sneak
south
speech
spice
spinach
spray
stain
stomp
stoop
studio couch
that's
trash
uh
uh huh
uh hmm
um
undershirt
vocal
wallpaper
weasel
weld
whip
whiskey
whoever
winner
woodcutter
worth
wrestler
wrinkle
yer [sic]

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